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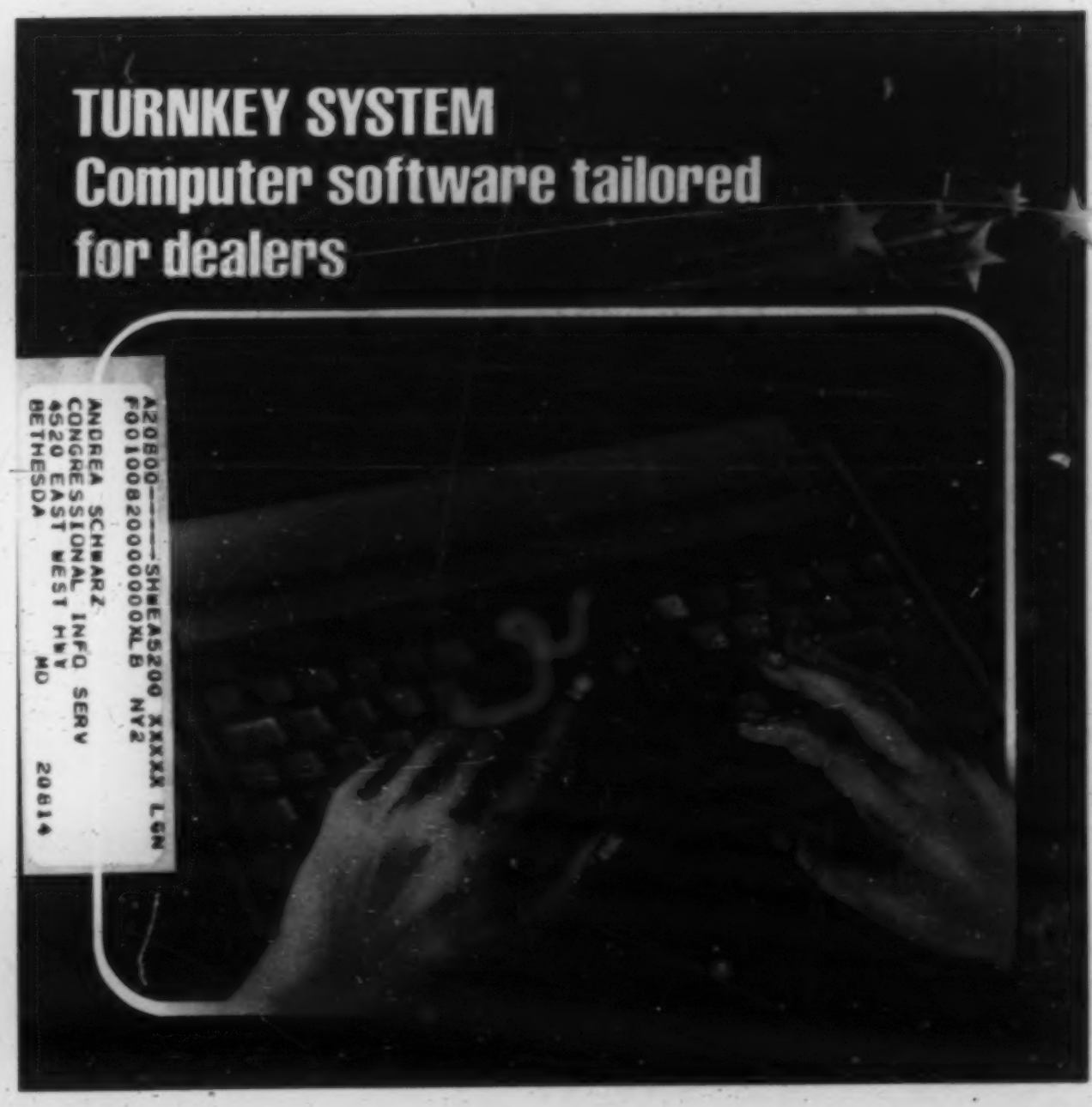
Lawn&Garden Marketing

JANUARY 1985

Reports on: • Relandscaping

• Warehouse retailing • OPE shipments



JANUARY 1985 VOL. 24, No. 1 PUBLISHED 10 TIMES ANNUALLY

Lawn&Garden Marketing

The merchandising magazine for lawn, garden and leisure living products.

6 **Cover story:** Tailor-made software for dealers is ready to run.

Cover illustration by Jim Clark.

24 **Relandscaping.** Opportunities are endless as more homeowners are fixing up, not buying new.

Photo courtesy of Ireland's Landscaping Inc.

6 **Turnkey system: computer software tailored for dealers.** R. E. Jarvis Co. markets well-tested system to its own dealers.

14 **Packaging winners.** Lawn and garden packaging award winners show and tell.

16 **Warehouse retail expansion quickens.** Companies across the country are following the lead of Home Depot of Atlanta in spreading new merchandising concept.

24 **Relandscaping: new opportunity for retailers, landscapers.** With new housing costs rising, more homeowners are redoing present homes themselves or hiring independent landscapers.

32 **Planning '85 Expo.** Show promises to be bigger and better with expanded exhibit space, demonstration area; buyers rate the '84 Expo.

34 **Manufacturers' shipments up 12.8 percent.** Results from OPEI indicate tractor sales increased in '84.

36 **Chemicals, fertilizers: $1.5 billion market.** Preliminary estimates indicate sales of lawn, garden and houseplant chemicals to consumers have increased about 6 percent annually since 1980.

40 **Geographic breakdown of America's gardeners.** Further results from '84 Gallup/GFA survey regionalize U.S. gardening households.

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48 New Products

Coming in February: Executives of major garden center chains discuss trends in products, consumers, competition and opportunities • A report on trends in prices and features of walk-behind mowers • ABCs of electric equipment.

Postmaster: Return form 3579 to Lawn & Garden Marketing, P.O. Box 12942, Overland Park, KS 66212-0930.

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Power Equipment Report

Vol. 6 No. 1 January 1985

Manufacturers' shipments up 12.8 percent

Total shipments of walk-behind power mowers, lawn tractors and riding mowers, riding garden tractors and rotary tillers increased 12.8 percent in the 1984 model year, according to estimates by the OPEI. The model year ended Aug. 31.

The most significant growth was for lawn tractors and riding mowers, which increased 23.9 percent over the 1983 model year. Shipments for '84 were 856,000 units as compared to 691,000 in '83.

Walk-behind power mowers totaled 4,950,000 units, an increase of 12.5 percent over the '83 estimate of 4,400,000 units shipped. The F.O.B. value increased 6.8 percent.

Rotary tillers, showed a 2.2 percent decrease in units but an increase in dollar value. The F.O.B. value for tiller shipments for the '84 model year was $197 million.

Riding garden tractor unit shipments increased 17.8 percent. The estimate indicates that 152,000 units were shipped during the '84 model year with an estimate of 129,000 units reported a year ago. The F.O.B. value shows an increase of 13.1 percent at $311 million. In '83, the value was $275 million.

The total F.O.B. factory shipment value for these products is $2.01 billion.

Key Lawn and Garden Categories – 1984 Model Year (Estimated)

Product	Unit Shipments 1984	Unit Shipments 1983	Change %	F.O.B. Shipment Value 1984	F.O.B. Shipment Value 1983	Change %
Walk-behind power mowers	4,950,000	4,400,000	+12.5	$ 742 MM	$ 695 MM	+ 6.8
Lawn tractors/riding mowers	856,000	691,000	+23.9	760 MM	600 MM	+26.7
Front engine	502,000	415,000	+21.0	482 MM	395 MM	+22.0
Rear engine	354,000	276,000	+28.3	278 MM	205 MM	+35.6
Riding garden tractors	152,000	129,000	+17.8	311 MM	275 MM	+13.1
Rotary tillers	399,000	408,000	– 2.2	197 MM	132 MM	*
	6,357,000	**5,628,000**	**+12.8**	**$2,010 MM**	**$1,702 MM**	*

*These data are not comparable to 1984 data.

Briefs

Canadiana Outdoor Products, Brampton, Ontario, has reached an agreement with Flymo Limited, Aycliffe, England, to distribute Flymo lawnmowers under an exclusive license for the U.S. market.

Sachs-Dolmar Division, Atlanta, Texas, has appointed Leif Persson product services manager. Persson will act as liaison between U.S. customers and the company headquarters in Hamburg, West Germany.

H. Allan Bloomingburg has joined Dixon Industries, Coffeyville, Kan., as a territory manager for Kentucky and Tennessee. He is based in Knoxville.

BCS Mosa Inc., Charlotte, N.C., appointed Jeff Pinnow manager of marketing services. The company also appointed John Clark as customer service representative.

Walter H. Bennett has been named chainsaw product manager for Poulan/Weed Eater, Shreveport, La.

Advanced Spring, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Advanced Automated Equipment Ltd., has opened offices in Newport, R.I., and a stocking warehouse in Port Huron, Mich. The company manufactures rewind springs for small gasoline engines.

William Hermanson, vice president of engineering for Tecumseh Products Co., Grafton, Wis., died Oct. 31, 1984, several days after undergoing heart surgery. Hermanson joined the Lauson Engine division as manager of advanced engineering in 1961.

MTD Products Inc., Cleveland, Ohio, purchased the packaging division of Arnold Industries and formed Arnold Corporation, a wholly owned subsidiary. The purchase closed Oct. 15, and MTD has moved the operation to its 110,000 square-foot manufacturing facility in Ohio.

Vernon Uhlinger has succeeded Norman Beck as the new president of NESDA; the term began at the start of the fiscal year, Dec. 1, 1984.

Juergen Buller has been appointed national sales manager for Roper brand outdoor power equipment. Prior to this appointment, he was director of marketing services for Roper, Kankakee, Ill.

'85 Expo update: see page 32

Carswell forms new company

Carswell Distributing Co., Winston-Salem, N.C., has formed a related company Carswell Import and Marketing Associates Inc.

The new firm will serve as the North American importer of Robin outdoor power products, including consumer and professional grass trimmers/brushcutters, backpack blowers and sprayers, hedge trimmers and water pumps. CIMA is establishing a nationwide distribution network.

Robert Carswell, president of Carswell Distributing Co., said that the formation of a separate company to handle the marketing of the Robin product line was a response to the equipment's national appeal.

William A. Parsley will serve as CIMA's president.

Chemicals, fertilizers: $1.5 billion market

■Preliminary estimates indicate that consumers will have spent $1.5 billion for lawn, garden and houseplant chemicals in 1984, an increase of about 6 percent annually since 1980.

According to a new survey, fertilizers, the largest segment, account for approximately 40 percent of total sales; insecticides for 35 percent; and herbicides, such soil conditioners as peat, lime, perlite, vermiculite, potting soils, rodenticides, and fungicides together account for the remaining 25 percent.

Despite the effects of the recent economic recession, manufacturers of these products showed sales gains during this period and the future remains promising. Estimates of 1984 sales of consumer pesticides and fertilizers and estimates of future growth are given by product category in the accompanying tables.

Table 1

Sales forecast of consumer pesticides, fertilizers

Millions of current manufacturers' dollars[1]

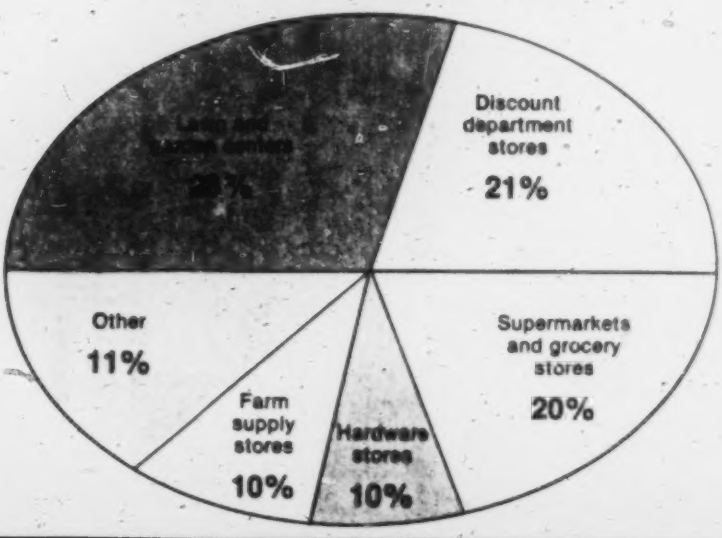
Product	1984	1989	Increase, %/yr.
Fertilizers	$ 590	$ 800	6.2%
Insecticides	530	800	8.6
Soil conditioners[2]	150	215	7.7
Herbicides	100	135	6.2
Potting soils	85	110	7.1
Rodenticides	35	46	8.8
Fungicides	10	14	7.0
Total	$1,500	$2,120	7.1%

[1]Assumes annual inflation rate of 5 percent.
[2]Peat, lime, vermiculite, perlite and other.

Table 2

Estimated sales by retail class

1984 estimates, percentage of manufacturers' dollars



The new survey by C.H. Kline & Co. shows that several trends have developed since this study was last conducted in 1980. For example, lawn care service companies are being used increasingly by consumers to apply pesticides and fertilizers to their lawns, thereby forcing manufacturers to re-examine their marketing strategies.

Also, products are becoming increasingly specialized, and such insecticides as ant and roach killers continue to attract new users while encouraging the development of other new products. And channels of distribution are changing as well; products once traditionally sold through lawn and garden centers are now being sold through a variety of outlets, including discount department stores and supermarkets.

The lawn, garden and houseplant chemical business continues to be competitive, with more than 250 companies selling products to consumers. In spite of this competition, Kline indicates that a large portion of the business is controlled by relatively few manufacturers. Some of the market leaders include O. M. Scott (ITT), S. C. Johnson, Ortho (Standard Oil of California), American Home Products and Estech (Esmark).

The Kline survey, a complete revision of its popular study first conducted in 1964 and later updated in 1975 and 1980, analyzes data collected through interviews conducted by the Kline staff with more than 180 suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, retail chains, government agencies and trade associations familiar with the industry. In addition, more than 1,000 consumers were surveyed using a nationally recognized mail panel, and 500 retail outlets were interviewed by telephone. □

Geographic breakdown of America's gardeners

In the November/December issue of **LGM**, a heading was omitted on the table appearing beneath the map titled "Percentage of all households involved in lawn or garden activity," page 6. Figures were results from the 1984 Gallup/Gardens for All survey.

The result of this omission was the implication that percentages were derived from the percentages in the map when in fact they were not; in actuality, the map percentages and the table percentages were derived from entirely different bases.

The 85.4 million U.S. households can be broken down geographically as follows:

Total U.S. households	
Midwest	22.0 million
South	25.2 million
East	21.6 million
West	16.6 million

Of these 85.4 million U.S. households, 84 percent in the West, 88 percent in the Midwest; 78 percent in the East and 82 percent in the South, are involved in lawn or garden activities.

The percentage of households with vegetable gardens and the percentage of households with flower gardens—based on the total number of households in each region—is as follows:

Gardening households		
	Vegetable	Flower
Midwest	43.2%	53.5%
South	35.8	40.9
East	42.1	46.3
West	33.5	48.7

These percentages convert regionally into 10 million vegetable and 12 million flower gardeners in the Midwest; 9 million vegetable and 10 million flower gardeners in the South; 9 million vegetable and 10 million flower gardeners in the East; and 6 million vegetable and 8 million flower gardeners in the West. This adds up to 34 million total vegetable and 40 million total flower gardeners in the U.S.

However, the actual geographic breakdown of America's gardeners—based on Gallup/GFA findings that 34 million households (or 40 percent of total households) are involved in vegetable gardening, and 40 million households (or 47 percent of total households) are involved in flower gardening—is as shown in the November/December **LGM** table:

Distribution of U.S. gardeners		
	Vegetable	Flower
Midwest	31%	29%
South	25	26
East	26	25
West	17	20

For a fact sheet on the results of the 1984 national gardening survey, contact Bruce Butterfield, research director, Gardens for All, 180 Flynn Ave., Burlington, VT 05401.

Calendar

FEBRUARY

Alabama Nurserymen's Assn., Feb. 3-4, Hyatt Birmingham, Birmingham, AL. Contact Judy P. Copeland, P.O. Box 9, Auburn, AL 36831-0009, (205) 887-6916.

The Fertilizer Institute Annual Meeting, Feb. 3-5, Hyatt Regency, Atlanta, GA. Contact Gary D. Myers, 1015 18th St., NW, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 861-4900.

American Assn. of Nurserymen NLA/GCA Management Clinic, Feb. 3-7, Galt House, Louisville, KY. Contact Robert F. Lederer, 1250 I St. NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20005, (202) 789-2900.

National Arborist Assn., Feb. 3-7, Frenchman's Reef, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. Contact Robert Felix, 1400 Wantagh Ave., Wantagh, NY 11793, (516) 221-3082.

Garden Centers of America, Feb. 4-6, Galt House, Louisville, KY. Contact Robert F. Lederer, 1250 I St. NW, Suite 500, Washington DC 20005, (202) 789-2900.

Wisconsin Nurserymen's Assn. Winter Workshop, Feb. 6, Holiday Inn, Fond Du Lac, WI. Contact Karin Jetzer, Route 1, Box 377, Conservation Rd., Lake Mills, WI 53551, (414) 648-2034.

Rhode Island Nurserymen's Assn. Annual Meeting, Feb. 7, Sheraton Islander Inn, Newport, RI. Contact John J. McGuire, 316 Woodward Hall, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI 02881, (401) 792-2791.

Weed Science Society of America, Feb. 8-10, Sheraton, Seattle, WA. Contact Claude Cruse, 309 W. Clark St., Champaign, IL 61820, (217) 356-3182.

American International Toy Fair, Feb. 11-20, 200 Fifth Ave., 1107 Broadway, 41 Madison Ave., 2 Pennsylvania Plaza, and Feb. 16-18 at The Sheraton Centre Hotel. Contact Donna M. Datre, Toy Manufacturers of America, (212) 675-1141.

National Spa & Pool Institute, Feb. 14-16, Community Center, Tucson, AZ. Contact Don J. DeBolt, 2111 Eisenhower Ave., Alexandria, VA 22314, (703) 838-0083.

National Christmas Tree Assn., Feb. 8-9, San Francisco, CA. Contact Jane Svinicki, 611 East Wells St., Milwaukee, WI 53202, (414) 276-6410.

Orgill Brothers Dallas Spring Market, Feb. 16-17, Texas State Fairgrounds Women's Building, Dallas, TX. Contact Dave Crays, Orgill Brothers & Co., P.O. Box 140, Memphis, TN 38101.

The Mid-America Show, Feb. 16-17, Ohio State Fairgrounds Multi-purpose Building, Columbus, OH. Contact Mary Calvert, P.O. Box 1828, Columbus, OH 43216, (614) 486-5278.

American Hardware Manufacturers Assn. Hardlines Conference/Winter Hardware Home Center Show, Feb. 17-19, Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV. Contact William P. Farrell, 931 N. Plum Grove Rd., Schaumberg, IL 60195, (312) 885-1025.

Nebraska Assn. of Nurserymen Annual Meeting and Certified Nurserymen Exam and Recertification, Feb. 20-21, University of Nebraska East Campus Student Union, Lincoln, NE. Contact Carol Papenhagen, P.O. Box 6306, Lincoln, NE 68506, (402) 483-7891.

International Erosion Control Assn., Feb. 21-22, Holiday Inn, Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco, CA. Contact Michael Mellon, P.O. Box 807, Freedom, CA 95019, (408) 684-1088.

Wisconsin Landscape Federation Annual Conference, Feb. 24-26, Sheraton Hotel, Madison, WI. Contact Bob Finnegan, 34613 Road E. Oconomowoc, WI 53066, (414) 567-2160.

Outdoor Power Equipment Distributors Assn., Feb. 24-27, San Antonio Marriott, San Antonio, TX. Contact John W. Kane, OPEDA, 1900 Arch St., Philadelphia, PA 19103, (215) 564-3484.

American Society of Agricultural Engineers Agri-Mation Conference, Feb. 25-28, Palmer House, Chicago, IL. Contact Mark Purschwitz, 2950 Niles Rd., St. Joseph, MI 49085, (616) 429-0300.

International Society of Arboriculture Midwestern Chapter Meeting, Feb. 27-March 1, Best Western New Tower Hotel, Omaha, NE. Contact Dave Mooter, (402) 444-7804.

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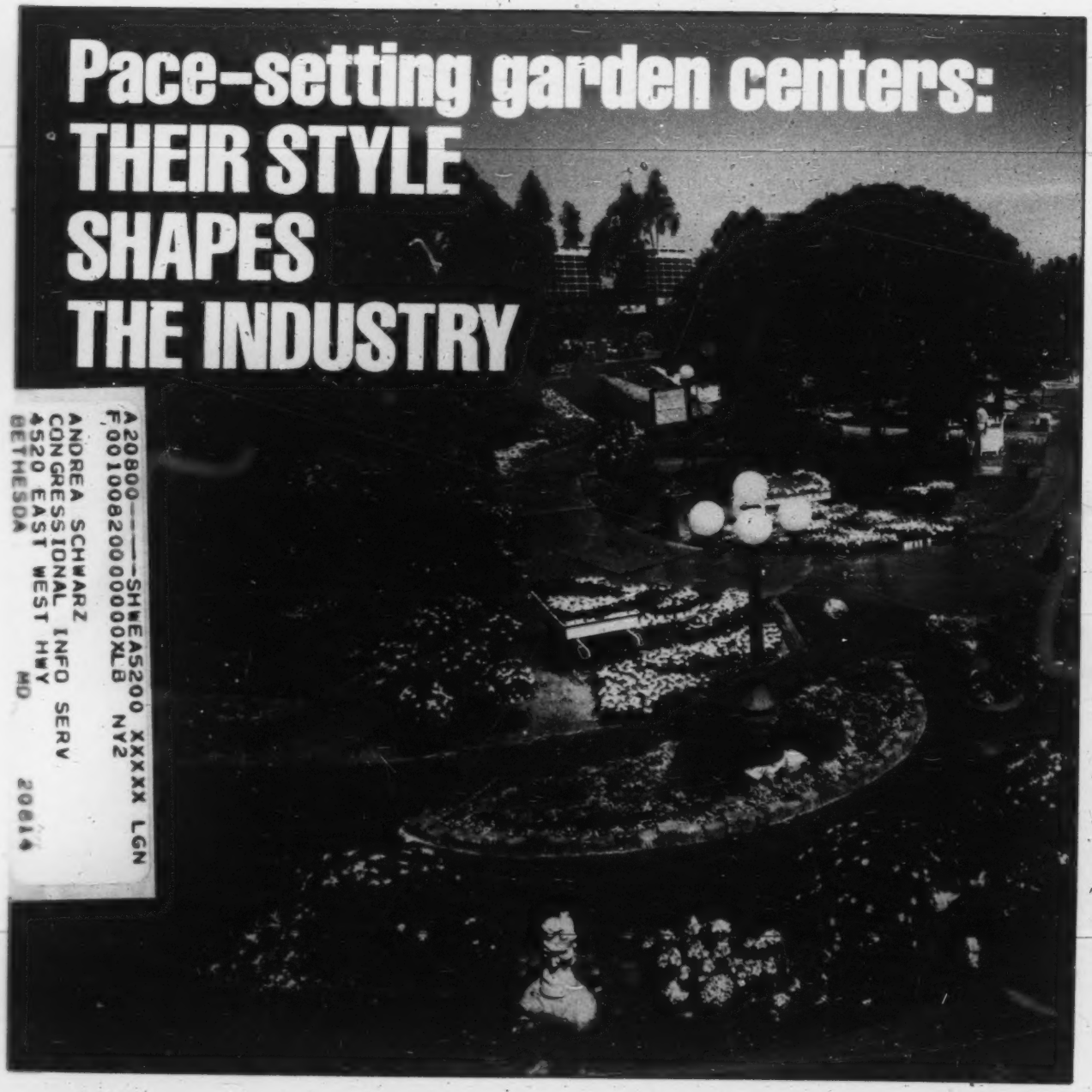
Lawn&Garden Marketing

FEBRUARY 1985

Reports on: •1984 fall sales • Mower prices

• ABCs of electric equipment

Pace-setting garden centers: THEIR STYLE SHAPES THE INDUSTRY



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ANDREA SCHWARZ
CONGRESSIONAL INFO SERV
4520 EAST WEST HWY
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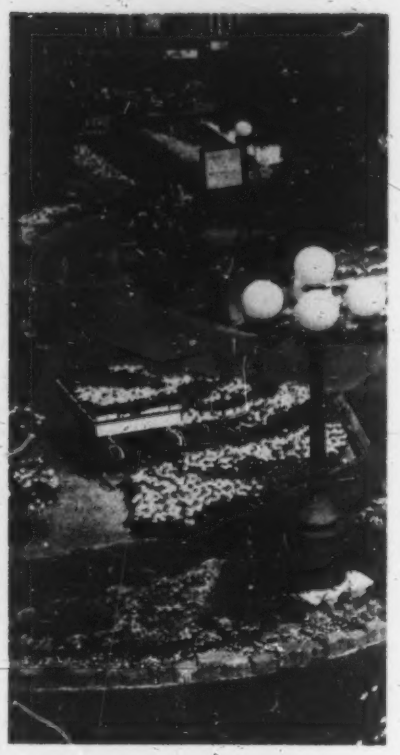

8 **Cover story:** Model garden centers turn insight into industry. Photo courtesy of Roger's Gardens.

38 **GIMA** is one of seven trade associations working to make England's GLEE a success in 1985.

8 **Pace-setting garden centers: their style shapes the industry.** Six retailers discuss strategies, including use of dynamic displays, advertising and trends in products.

16 **Daily seminars educate gardeners.** Roger's Gardens tells how demonstrations have become part of its daily business, attracting customers from miles around.

18 **Have walk-behind mowers hit a price barrier?** Key manufacturers discuss features of their 1985 line and concerns about prices.

30 **Product movement report, fall 1984.** Kerosene heaters continued to show sharp national declines; chainsaw market remained steady and sales of blower-vacuums and flowering bulbs increased.

38 **How England builds lawn and garden leadership role.** British industry builds momentum with aid of a festival, trade shows and numerous trade associations.

75 **Lawn care industry joins ranks as high-tech business.** Computer system simplifes accounting and marketing for LCOs.

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Coming in March: Selling safer pest controls • Update on riders and tractors • ABCs of bird feeders.

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Product Movement Report fall, 1984

■Retailers reported increased sales for fall 1984 in six of the eight product lines surveyed by **Lawn & Garden Marketing**.

Only kerosene heaters continued to show sharp national declines, and the chainsaw market remained fairly steady.

Bulbs were strong sellers nationally with 31.2 percent of retailers reporting increased sales and only 6.5 percent indicating decreases. Of those reporting increases, 14.5 percent showed increases of 15 percent or more.

Grass seed followed a similar trend with 48.6 percent of the retailers reporting sales up and only 8.7 percent reporting them down. As with bulbs, the trend was especially pronounced in the North Central region where 62.2 percent showed increased sales, and 2.7 percent showed decreases.

Sales of lawn fertilizers also appeared to be up although the market is not as strong as that for grass seed. The North Central region again was the only region to have more retailers report sales down than up.

The market for garden tools appears to have increased slightly with 27.5 percent of the retailers showing increases and 12.4 percent decreases.

The chainsaw market is relatively steady with 21.5 percent of retailers, nationally, reporting increases and 17.3 percent indicating decreases.

There was also little change in the median current inventory of chainsaws for the fall season. In 1984, the median number of units per store was 17.1, and this year it is 18.3. Only in the West was the median significantly lower. In the West the 1984 figure was 20.9 while this year it dropped to 17.0 units.

Snowthrower sales seem to be slightly better also. Nationally, more than 50 percent of the retailers reported sales the same or up from last year. Only 8.2 percent reported lower sales.

The Northeast was especially strong with 77.7 percent reporting the same or better sales. The South and West had much lower responses but still followed the increased sales trend.

The sales of leaf blowers and vacuums are also improved. Nationally, almost 29 percent of the retailers indicate better sales figures, and only 9.2 percent show decreases.

Again kerosene heater sales declined sharply continuing previous trends. It also appears that many dealers are leaving the market. More than 25 percent of the retailers reporting indicated decreases sales. In the North Central region, the percentage reporting decreases jumped to 36.3 percent. No region had more retailers report sales up or steady than it did down. □

Eight product lines measured

		TOTAL %	NORTHEAST %	N. CENTRAL %	SOUTH %	WEST %	
Bulbs	Up	31.2	26.4	32.4	29.4	28.6	↑
	Same	27.5	27.3	18.9	31.4	32.2	
	Down	6.5	9.1	2.7	7.8	7.1	
Grass seed	Up	48.6	54.6	62.2	41.2	39.3	↑
	Same	31.9	31.8	27.0	27.5	46.4	
	Down	8.7	4.6	2.7	11.8	14.3	
Lawn fertilizer	Up	35.1	30.8	21.1	42.3	43.7	↑
	Same	46.0	61.5	47.4	42.3	37.5	
	Down	17.6	7.7	26.4	15.4	18.8	
Garden tools	Up	27.5	31.8	21.6	31.4	25.0	↑
	Same	52.9	59.1	51.4	51.0	53.6	
	Down	12.4	9.1	16.2	11.7	10.8	
Chainsaws	Up	21.5	36.1	15.7	20.0	16.0	↔
	Same	34.0	30.6	27.5	36.0	48.0	
	Down	17.3	11.1	23.5	12.0	24.0	
Snowthrowers	Up	26.4	40.7	30.3	8.0	23.1	↑
	Same	24.5	37.0	26.4	4.0	7.7	
	Down	8.2	11.1	15.2	.....	.....	
Leaf blowers/ Vacuums	Up	28.6	48.2	21.2	20.0	23.1	↑
	Same	39.8	25.9	48.5	48.0	30.8	
	Down	9.2	.....	6.1	12.0	30.8	
Kerosene Heaters	Up	4.1	.....	9.1	4.0	.....	↓
	Same	2.0	.....	3.0	.....	7.7	
	Down	25.5	7.4	36.3	28.0	30.8	

Because of multiple responses, percentages do not add up to 100%

Current inventory of chainsaws (median no. of units per store)	18.3	19.1	16.4	20.0	17.0

Eight product lines sold through four key classes of retailers were measured by **LGM** for this survey.

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Lawn&Garden Marketing

MARCH 1985

Reports on: • New crop of pest controls

• 7 media categories

• Summer gardening

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ANDREA SCHWARZ
CONGRESSIONAL INFO SERV
4520 EAST WEST HWY
BETHESDA MD 20814

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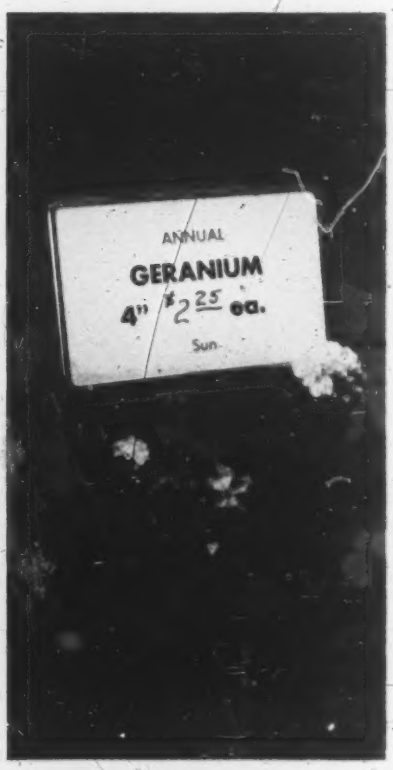
6 **Target marketing.** Nine action steps are outlined to help retailers focus in on consumers who purchase high-ticket items.

Cover photos courtesy of Simplicity Mfg., Ariens Co. and Deere & Co.



30 **Summer sales.** Reports from some bedding plant growers point to summer sales potential.

6 **Selling riders and tractors: Target marketing is the game.** Retailers who carefully study differences in customer styles and attitudes may determine the success of new marketing strategies adopted by major manufacturers.

14 **Chemical debates yield new crop of products.** Are biological controls economically feasible? Will the slower-acting results from them be acceptable to the public? These and other questions are addressed by **LGM** contributing editor, Steve Trusty.

14 **One major supplier's view of the pest control future.** Highlights of a talk to the CSMA by Mel Garbett, manager of product development and evaluation at Chevron Chemical Co., include a long-range look at biological pest controls.

30 **New hype for summer gardening?** Comments gathered in the 1984 BPI survey indicate bedding plants can be sold successfully throughout the summer season.

46 **PPEMA endorses Expo '85.** Members of the Portable Power Equipment Manufacturers Assn. join four other key industry associations in supporting the Louisville show.

48 **Pros and cons of seven media categories.** Strengths and weaknesses of seven retail advertising forums are presented in this new **LGM** column.

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Coming in April/May: Most profitable fall products • Progress report on the Fall Is For Planting program • Product Movement Report • ABCs of Rodenticides.

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Selling riders, tractors

TARGET MARKETING IS THE GAME

By Scott Nesbitt

■Upscale riders? Downscale tractors? Rob Peter to pay Paul?

Those are among the questions facing builders and marketers of ride-on mowing equipment at the turbulent mid-point of this decade.

The riding market surged last year after a three-year slump, but the mix has shifted. Garden tractor shipments are far down from the peak of 10 years ago. But the lighter-weight lawn tractors and rear-engine riders seem to be taking up the slack to push total unit shipments near the magic one-million mark.

Where is the market heading? Is it really just one market, or are there particular spots, particular groups of customers, that are just right for certain designs, certain brands and certain retailers?

Consider the recent actions of just a few major builder/marketers of outdoor power equipment:

•Murray Ohio Mfg. Co., a big mass-merchant rider builder for retailers like K mart, announces a spin-off, the Sabre Corp. Sabre will use telemarketing to go direct to independent dealers, offering an upscale, re-engineered riding mower and lawn tractor line with a better-than-usual profit margin.

•Roper Outdoor Power Equipment, long a supplier to Sears, increases the push to get servicing dealers for its bronze Roper ride-on line, while introducing a green-colored Roper Rally line aimed at mass merchants.

•MTD, a major private-label producer and marketer under its own name, forges ahead to retain the separate identity of its Cub Cadet line (formerly part of International Harvester) and its Yard Man line, once an independent builder.

•Deere & Co., having built a million garden tractors and gained an upscale product image, introduces a new rear-engine rider R series specifically called a lower-price line.

•Ford Tractor Operations, a major marketer of blue-painted Gilson mowers, adds three commercial walk-behinds. (Deere has also entered the commercial market with Bunton-made mowers and Deere-built front-running riders.)

The expertise used in launching marketing plans for major suppliers of high-ticket power equipment can be employed at the retail level, too.

•Toro is telling potential dealers, "there's a great growth opportunity on the commercial side of the fence," while at the same time re-committing the company to servicing dealers handling Toro consumer products.

There are two common themes seen in these and other moves in the industry in recent years. First is a broadening of product lines to hit several spots up and down the price/quality spectrum. Second is an attempt by some builders to retail their products through both the mass merchants and the independent servicing dealer. Are these moves a fit of madness, or is there some hidden logic in the strategies being played out?

Targeting the market

The mass merchants and independent dealers have co-existed, often uneasily, for years.

As an Arizona independent dealer commented, "They've got their customers, and I've got mine. It's not worth chasing their people, so I work at keeping the customers I've got."

A Wisconsin distributor put it like this: "There are people who buy garbage, and they'll always buy garbage. The servicing dealer has to write them off as customers."

Confirmation of those individual observations, and some nourishing food for thought about ride-on mower marketing, come from a Stanford Research Institute project called the Values and Lifestyles program (VALS), which each year since 1978 has asked 2,000 adult Americans to answer 33 questions about attitudes and demographics.

From the responses, VALS identifies individual personalities and divides those into nine different groups, each constituting a market unto itself.

"VALS enables you to talk with a target audience as if they were old friends," says John H. Mather, director of marketing and research for Ketchum Advertising, Pittsburgh. Mather presented VALS and its tulip-shaped schematic diagram at the October 1984 AHMA National Hardware Convention in

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Target marketing

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Phoenix, Ariz.

Three VALS groups contain a large chunk of America's home-owning families: the Achievers, the Belongers and the Societally Conscious. All have the income to purchase equipment and the need for equipment to mow grass and handle other chores. It is the differences in their styles and attitudes that shape their buying patterns and may determine the failure or success of the new strategies adopted by the industry.

Of particular importance to the individual store manager, and the industry that relies on him to make sales, is that each VALS group is attracted to a particular housing type and lifestyle. So, regardless of what the tulip chart shows about group proportions in the U.S. population, a particular trade area may be dominated by only one or two VALS groups.

Structuring the wrong local advertising effort, storefront image and sales-staff approach may produce a sales disaster, no matter how right the specific product might be for the local trade area.

How to understand Achievers

Clustered around the golf course, overlooking the scenic little lakes, are the homes of the Achievers—the affluent 22 percent of the population who have made it and want to show the world they have.

Highly-assured, able individuals, they are hard working and comfort-loving. As an outer-directed group, the Achievers are very concerned with symbolism. Forty percent of them own houses worth more than $75,000; many have multiple homes. This group is the one most likely to believe the home is a visible symbol of personal success.

Achievers, says Mathers, are symbolic do-it-yourselfers whose homes and garages are virtual warehouses of the best hardware on the market. They rely on brand names to certify the quality of their purchases. They rely heavily on contractors for home improvements because their work in business, the professions and government limits their time for projects.

"Product appearance and status matter as much or more than price alone" to Achievers, says Mathers. They are more concerned about what a product says about them than what it does for them.

Achievers rank first among VALS groups in owning ride-on mowers, walk-behind mowers, tillers, gas and electric trimmers and snowblowers.

Achievers expect prompt service at hardware stores and home centers, says Mathers. "Because they have neither the time nor inclination to research products on their own, Achievers depend heavily on sales personnel for detailed product information and purchase recommendation.

"If you, as a hardlines retailer, intend to reach the Achievers," he advises, "you should have arresting displays out in the open. Compared to most adults, Achievers are apt to patronize hardware specialty stores and tend to avoid discount stores."

The stable Belongers

Moving away from the suburbs and the Achievers into "small town" America, one finds the older, modest-sized homes of the Belongers, who Mathers calls "conservative, stable and deeply happy individuals."

One of three adults is a Belonger. They are an aging group with low to average incomes reflecting a one-paycheck family supported by work in skilled, blue-collar trades. Their typical homes are valued in the $20,000 to $50,000 bracket, and one-fourth have their mortgages paid off. Being outside the city, the homes have large yards, and the owners take gardening seriously, often considering gardening as an income-stretcher.

Ownership of garden tractors and tillers is high; ride-on mower ownership is higher than average.

The Belonger home is a symbol of family pride and success; the owner's skilled hands tackle much of the maintenance and improvement, including service on power machinery like mowers.

Mather says the Belongers tend to be frugal shoppers who favor proven national brands out of tradition, patriotism and a firm belief that American-made items are the best. Belongers plan and budget for purchases and redeem store coupons.

As customers, Belongers want a lot of breathing room. They like to browse, and, by nature, they prefer to blend-in rather than stand-out; the less sales pressure the better. They prefer stores with conventional, familiar layouts, and rank high in patronizing discount chains.

The Societally Conscious

Outside the Belongers and Achievers, most VALS groups are young and in transition, or older and financially strapped; in any event, ownership of a home and related power equipment are minor factors. Yet one unusual group stands out from the rest—the Societally Conscious.

Mather points out that the Societals are growing in number, and may indicate a wave of the future among consumers.

Like Achievers, he says, the

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Action steps for retailers

- Study traffic count reports from city or state highway departments on existing retail site, and on potential new sites.
- Set aside time each month to study ad message and ad media used by own firm, and by competitors.
- Try to evaluate which of the VALS categories own customers would best fit into and which ad media is most appropriate to reach them.
- Obtain circulation statistics and maps from metropolitan and from suburban newspapers serving your region.
- Obtain Arbitron ratings of local radio stations serving your area.
- Obtain demographic data from local chamber of commerce, or from shopping center developers in the area.
- Get bids from direct mail services in your area, and discuss with them the advantages of mailing to census zones rather than zip codes.
- Place city or regional map on bulletin board, and identify locale of different types of major purchases (lawn tractor, garden tractor, rider, other items as indicated) by different color pin for each product or service.
- Monitor new zoning for residential properties or plans by developers who intend to construct housing on sites of one acre or more. These new households will be high-income properties and will likely need riding equipment to maintain turf areas, driveways.

Target marketing

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Societals are self-assured, but there the similarities end. Being inner-directed, they tend to be activists motivated by a sense of societal responsibility, and are leaders of causes for conservation, environmentalism and consumerism.

They are affluent, successful and of early middle age, but more likely than Achievers to be in professions rather than management.

More than half their homes are valued at $50,000 or more, but they are under-represented in suburbs and medium-sized cities, tending toward large cities or small rural areas.

Societals are knowledgeable do-it-yourselfers, able to repair machinery and remodel their homes. The home is not so much a symbol of success as it is a nurturing and creative environment for learning and sharing.

The Societally Conscious tend to be selective customers who can well afford power tools and equipment. They are strategic shoppers and are the hardest customers to please. They are the VALS group most likely to have complained to a store.

They tend to research products on their own and do not make quick decisions based on what store clerks tell them. They tend to know what they want before entering a store and appreciate product literature or other printed information detailing features and usage as well as "how to" books.

Because this group attaches the least importance to brand names, Mather says, they create for themselves a broader set of patronage options. They seek value for money, are frugal shoppers and are high in redeeming coupons. They cover the spectrum of shopping sources, from specialty stores, mail-order, telephone shopping and department stores, though they are less inclined than average to shop at discount stores.

Dividing the market

Given the analysis of consumers laid out in the VALS system, it appears the broadening of market offerings and product variations makes good sense.

A company that breaks away from mass-merchant and department-store retail outlets to concentrate on independent servicing dealers would, presumably, be directing itself at the Achievers and some of the Societals, while writing off the bulk of the Belongers.

Broadening the price spread within a brand line allows the product to retain the status so important to Achievers, while allowing more persons, who adopt that style but don't have the bucks, to satisfy their need for external recognition.

Adopting a two-track approach, by marketing through mass merchants and independent specialty stores, gives other manufacturers a toe-hold in the Achiever and Belonger segments, while picking up some of the value-conscious Societals.

The continuing move of major lawn and garden equipment builders into the commercial segment also seems to make good sense, particularly when the product is aimed at the Achievers as well as the true commercial user.

The Achiever who buys product color and associated brand image is able, with a commercial product, to get the ego recognition he needs, while also getting a sturdy product that won't wear out on the job. The image, after all, won't remain a strong motivator if the product falls short on performance. This is particularly important if the manufacturer and dealer hope to make repeat sales to fill those hardware warehouses the Achievers maintain.

In short, it appears that the market for ride-on equipment is actually a set of three distinct markets, each large enough to support several manufacturers and many variations in product types.

The recent upturn in ride-on sales shows that lighter-duty machines are displacing the larger garden tractors in the market, leading some observers to believe the manufacturers are robbing their own garden tractor sales by pushing sales of lawn tractors and rear-engine riders.

It may be, though, that sales of commercial mowers are eating into garden tractor sales, especially as the cost differential between the two types of machines narrows, and the commercial units become quieter, easier-riding, simpler to operate and more versatile.

If the VALS analysis does reveal something valuable about buyers, it may be that the Achievers prefer owning many individual machines to handle chores and stock their garages. The multi-purpose garden tractor, with its various attachments, limits the number of individual machines that can be bought, and imposes the inconvenience of having to change attachments.

The Achievers, a traditional market for up-scale equipment, may be dictating the long-term future of the top-of-the-line product offerings through their need for status and recognition. □

Historical trends in ride-on shipments

(All figures in 1,000s of units)

Year	Riders	Lawn tractors	Sub-total	Garden tractors	Total
1985 (est.)	322	479	801	153	954
1984	354	502	856	152	1008
1983	276	415	691	129	820
1982	261	393	654	146	800
1981	250	370	620	151	771
1980	314	494	808	220	1028
1979	343	515	858	254	1112
1978	273	477	750	219	969
1977	266	404	670	215	885
1976	*	*	690	210	900
1975	*	*	640	230	870
1974	*	*	1020	325	1345
1973	*	*	920	305	1225

Data from Outdoor Power Equipment Institute.
*Rear-engine riders and lawn tractors (front engine) were not broken out separately until 1977.